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Do What Yourself?: Querying the Status of 'It' in Contemporary Punk

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In order to 'Do it Yourself', one needs to have some idea as to what 'it' is, presumably. From the late 1970s punk scene onwards, many took 'it' to be releasing a record: some were content to simply perform a gig or several gigs, but actually releasing a vinyl record, or even a flexi or a tape, brought a certain credibility and seriousness to the profile of a band. However, some within the punk scene would appear to have realised early on that releasing records is not necessarily the best way to ensure that 'anyone can do it'. Latterly, record sales have slumped and yet much of the DiY punk scene, even in its more radical and leftist margins, has critically failed to really explore the necessity and validity of releasing physical copies of musical performance. Should 'we' still be making records in the 21st century? Perhaps so, the article goes on to argue in the light of Walter Benjamin's discussion of the on-going value of physical collections. 'The' revolution is not yet here and, under a capitalist system, we still may want to make records for some time yet; but a critical stance on pressing records in particular and DiY in general will do the punk scene no harm. Perhaps, indeed, making records is not the best 'it' which one can do and other forms of doing it yourself (putting on gigs, designing visual imagery, unrecorded musical performance and so forth) deserve to be valued more highly within the DiY punk scene(s).

Keywords

DiY

Punk

Vinyl

Walter Benjamin

Indie

Ten years ago, in 2008, I published an article in *Popular Music History* under the title 'It Was Easy, It Was Cheap, So What?: Reconsidering the DiY Principle of Punk and Indie Music' (Dale 2008). My main focus, therein, was the history of indie/punk-related 'independent' labels: how much independence from 'the majors' had really been achieved since the 1970s, and to what extent was it valid to assume that the ideal of an independent 'alternative' sector was/is always doomed to recuperation by the mainstream industry?

This article will cover some of the same ground as that one, in the sense that the broad topic remains the querying of DiY rather than the assumption that DiY offers some kind of perfect solution to the problems of capitalism.ⁱ DiY simply needs to be rolled out more widely for greater impact, according to the latter mind-set; 'they'd really like to know why you haven't made your single yet...', to quote the Desperate Bicycles (Quoted in Dale 2008: 174). My priority, herein, remains the querying of such a mind-set. However, my trajectory differs now from that earlier piece by focussing less on the historic status of independent labels and more on the efficacy of 'Do it Yourself' in the *contemporary* punk and post-punk scene(s). Moreover, what should the 'it' of DiY actually be, today: does it have to be a material product, a physical record? Many things have changed since that 2008 article, let alone since the heyday of the indie/punk record label (the late 1970s and 1980s, that is). In those halcyon days (at least halcyon from a sales point of view), independent labels could mount a reasonably serious challenge to an area of industrial capitalism (the record industry, that is) which

was then significantly profitable. The indie challenge to the majors was serious enough that the latter bought up distributors, bought into labels and enticed bands away from the independent labels that had initially nurtured them.

In 2018, by contrast, direct profits from record sales are a fraction of what they used to be, as is well known. The sales slowdown was well underway by 2008, certainly, and the rise of YouTube had begun but, at the time I wrote 'It Was Easy...', Spotify was yet to launch and, rather than Facebook, it was MySpace which was the talk of the (traditional, and still extremely powerful at that time) media. As I noted in my article, some scholarly commentators on punk at that point were celebrating the open-access character of MySpace as a perfect fruition of punk's DiY promise that 'anyone can do it' (Wendel 2008). My argument was, in short, that it has always been the case that 'anyone can do it' in the sense of making a musical sound for others to hear and potentially enjoy (or, at least, respond to). Neither punk in the 1970s onwards nor internet technology in the 21st century has any absolute purchase on the idea that anyone can do it. George Melly, to cite an example almost at random, was already praising the 'the "Anyone can do it" side' of skiffle ('a few chords and you were away') years before the UK punk 'explosion' erupted (Melly 1970: 29). Punk and technology respectively have helped with *distribution* of amateur creativity, certainly; but anyone who wants to make a sound and call it music has always been able to, in principle at least.

There is no question, however, that punk encouraged the DiY/anyone can do it idea remarkably strongly from the late 1970s onwards. *Spiral Scratch*, for example, was a landmark record which encouraged a vast array of people to 'have a go', to move directly to independent agency without significant recourse to external instruction, to do it themselves. For many bands, the obvious thing to have a go at was making a record using the DiY mode (and aesthetic, of course), after *Spiral Scratch*.ⁱⁱ However, not all groups saw it that way: for example, the Prefects would seem to have viewed making a record as a non-essential activity, as is partly reflected in the fact that no record was forthcoming until they had split up and further suggested by the title of that record, 'Going Through The Motions' (1979).

Thanks to the internet, it is easier, cheaper and more convenient than ever to make music publicly available. For a contemporary punk band, however, it is not necessarily easier to get attention within the 'scene' than it was, say, twenty years ago: there is a lot of noise out there, and it can be very difficult to be heard above it. In 1998, by contrast, making a DiY punk seven inch single still gave a band a pretty good chance of reaching a good few hundred listeners (possibly thousands) and being 'taken seriously' within a distinct subculture. For the punk leftist/idealist there is a question as to whether getting heard by lots of people is really all that important anyway, of course. If anyone can do it, surely no-one should be valorised above anyone else for the way they do it, in a perfect (punk) world?

I have wrestled with this broad question at significant length elsewhere (Dale 2012). Herein, I want to narrow my focus to contemporary punk and the question as to whether making physical copies of records should remain the central principle behind leftist and punk-affiliated DiY music and culture. Perhaps making records is not the best 'it' which one can do and other forms of doing it yourself (putting on gigs, designing visual imagery, unrecorded musical performance and so forth) deserve to be valued more highly within the DiY punk scene(s). The purpose of the present article is not to celebrate such alternative modes of DiY, praiseworthy though I consider them to be. Rather, I want to critically explore the question of making physical copies of records in relation to DiY punk. For example, should punks (or anyone else, come to that) be pressing vinyl when it is now possible to distribute music free of charge without using up more of the earth's resources? Is the DiY record label and, indeed, the record label itself as traditionally conceived, soon to become a thing of the

past? Even more fundamentally, should the 'it' of DiY be a material product, or should leftist punk/post-punk musicians perhaps just be making music in real time (or doing DiY in other ways) without any concern for longevity, historical recognition and an (oxymoronic, some will say) 'career in punk'? I begin with these questions before diverting for a brief consideration of all this in relation to a theoretical piece of writing by Walter Benjamin.

Dematerialising DiY Punk

According to several sources, Fugazi sold upwards of 250,000 copies of their 1991 album *Repeater* (for example, Earles 2014: 118). Ian MacKaye of Fugazi jointly set up the Dischord label which released these records, making them DiY punk releases of a clear type. The broad idea of DiY punk, at least within a certain (and significantly large) milieu, is that one should be inspired to join in by doing one's own record: as quoted above, the Desperate Bicycles stated in 1977 that 'they'd really like to know why you haven't made your single yet...'. However, if a quarter of a million people bought Fugazi's album and each of those buyers made their own record which sold the same number, sixty two (and a half, to be precise) billion records would be manufactured.

Does the world need 250, 000 DiY punk bands? It depends what 'need' means: moreover, we might want to ask whether everyone ('anyone') should gain the chance to express themselves through music. On that question, this author has no hesitation in affirming as much: if people want to play music, they should do it and be encouraged to do it. If punk can encourage that option, all well and good. A question remains, however, as to whether the music which gets done needs commemoration with a physical object called a record.

Of course, one might object that the sixty two billion figure arises if and only if each of the 250, 000 bands was as popular as Fugazi. In practice, Fugazi's runaway popularity was entirely exceptional and, therefore, no other band is likely to sell anything like such vast quantities. This objection raises a problem of its own, however: if more people want to listen to Fugazi than, say, Gray Matter (also on the Dischord label), aren't we allowing a return of a hierarchy which leftist DiY punk pretended to have dispelled? Surely lauding Fugazi as the lords of DiY is contradictory to the principle that anyone can do it, on at least some level? The trouble with such a complaint is the fact that Fugazi's music is demonstrably popular to a massive extent: to restrict its distribution could only be a Stalinist stifling of individual choice, arguably. DiY punk has to recognise that one band is likely to be more popular than another, presumably. If this hierarchy – I can see no other word for what is under discussion – means that DiY punk is simply responding to 'the real world', so be it, many will say.

This situation existed in DiY punk for a long time: hierarchies were tacitly accepted, competition remained in play and, let us not forget, records were bought and sold thus allowing profits to be made (petit-bourgeois capitalism, I believe they call it). The rise of online music distribution systems offers a possible shift to some of this, now and in the future: specifically, it is now possible to make music available for download without physically pressing records and thus, presumably, reducing some of the petit-bourgeois elements as well as reducing, arguably, elements of competition (not to forget environmental waste). There are a few problems with this claim, however. Firstly, MP3 is thought by many to be sonically inferior to vinyl reproduction. One can challenge this argument up to a point by arguing that punk was never supposed to be about hi-fidelity and, for example, flexi discs hardly sounded great, yet were very popular in a certain time. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that, where there is demand for vinyl, it is reasonable for the music to be made available on that format, surely. Secondly, having the capability to upload music to (and, normally speaking, to legally download popular music from) the internet requires cash: not everyone in the world can afford a laptop and access to broadband, in fact, and thus online distribution can hardly be said to be entirely

separate from the petit-bourgeois would (nor big business, come to that). Thirdly, online music distribution retains competitive tendencies to the extent that, for example, YouTube hits can be compared. Other platforms do mask the data evidence of popularity, of course: one can visit a Bandcamp page without ever knowing how many downloads have taken place, but even then the platform in question lists 'supporters' which could certainly be taken as a yardstick of popularity. At present, it is quite easy to go online and get a general feel for the comparative popularity of this or that DiY punk band (quantity of 'followers' on the near-obligatory Facebook page and so forth).

A fourth objection is particularly pivotal for present purposes: given that capitalism cannot be simply wished away with a swish of the hand, people in bands need to find remuneration for their agency, normally speaking. Many platforms, including Spotify and Bandcamp, charge fees or take a 'cut' for the 'service' they have provided. One could argue that it is better to have the bulk of something than 100% of nothing, of course. However, other financial 'realities' lurk in the shadows of DiY. Recording costs are the most obvious sticking point, in this context. If money is spent on recording, it used to be possible to recoup it through retailing records. Nowadays, this is much harder to do and if a band makes its music free for download, as some DiY punk bands do, it becomes near impossible to recoup recording costs. Obviously new technology makes it possible for DiY recordings to be created with very limited costs: one can potentially borrow a laptop (even if one does not own one), download software such as Audacity free of charge and create a multi-tracked recording with no real overheads. That said, the resultant recording will probably sound fairly poor, given that Audacity is not really designed for recording music. Doubtless more appropriate 'freeware' for recording music can be found, or commercial software can be illegally copied provided one has the knowhow and (no pun intended) audacity. Even then, however, home-recorded music is unlikely to sound as professional and, more bluntly, sound as good as something recorded by someone who has training and/or experience as a sound engineer.

According to rhetoric in and around the DiY punk scene, leftist DiY punk bands don't care about professionalism nor the conventional value systems which structure perceptions of 'good' and 'bad' music. Some DiY punk bands refuse to use 'social media' platforms at all, and many bands rail against social media and so forth before begrudgingly utilising it. In practice, in any case, discourses in and around the DiY punk scene certainly do focus on sound quality and the like. Returning to the case of Fugazi, for example, it is notable that the group's Ian MacKaye would travel to the UK especially to mix Fugazi's recordings (Anderson and Jenkins 2001: 280). Not many DiY labels could afford such a trip and it is obvious that Dischord, by the end of the 1980s, was far from being a normal DiY label (we can say the same for Epitaph in the 1990s and other labels, of course – Rough Trade by the time they had the Smiths on the label, for example). There are many good things about the sales growth that this label experienced: for example, the fact that it was able to have several employees and to offer them health care insurance as part of their employment (ibid: 354). It can also be reasonably asserted, however, that there are losses as well as gains when DiY labels grow their sales: complex questions around profit-sharing, unfair advantages and competition arise, and DiY starts to seem less like a beautifully simple solution and more like, arguably, a micro-capitalist 'alternative' which is dangerously close to the thing it was supposed (by leftist punks, at least) to oppose (Dunn 2016: 127-158).

Today, such a 'problem' can appear less likely to occur because record sales have fallen so low that a label is extremely unlikely to find itself struggling to think of the fairest way to share out its large and unexpected profits. However, DiY's relationship with capitalism remains a conundrum which will trouble those who think deeply about the desire (seemingly felt by many, or so leftist punk rhetoric would lead us to believe) to maintain some absolute independence from multi-national

corporations. Yes, DiY punk record labels are making less money than ever and many are struggling to survive. However, new revenue streams are opening up including live appearances at corporately-sponsored events, business deals with multi-national companies and so forth. Even placing music on YouTube means that a band will have its music rubbing shoulders with big business adverts.

How is the struggling contemporary DiY group to survive without recourse to such platforms as YouTube, however? Many such groups can't manage to shift 200 copies of a self-released vinyl single, today. The downturn in sales potential has been devastating. Countless books on late 1970s UK punk suggest that, at that time, selling 500 copies was very easily done and much higher sales were achievable without great difficulty. One example of runaway sales success for a record from that era, with a far from obviously commercial sound, would be the Television Personalities' *Where's Bill Grundy Now?* EP (1978). The EP is reputed to have sold 20,000 on the band's DiY label Kings Road and a further 15,000 on Rough Trade, thus totalling 35,000; and yet the impression created by Neil Taylor's recent account of the Television Personalities suggests that their process of making and promoting records was haphazard in the extreme (Taylor 2017: 48).

Perhaps, of course, the records of that era were simply more interesting and better than those of the present era; it is at least fair to say that there is a certain casual quality to, sticking with the last example, the Television Personalities' recordings which few if any of today's bands seem capable of matching. However, such is (at best) only part of the story: without singling out any of the contemporary DiY bands for praise nor denigrating specific bands from the past, it would seem likely that at least some contemporary bands have a musical appeal equal to, or even in excess of, those from the 1970s and 1980s. Record sales, however, will not attest to this: no matter how good and well-known the contemporary band, volume of sales in the DiY sector are highly unlikely to exceed the figure which *Where's Bill Grundy Now?* is said to have achieved in 1978. This, of course, is due to the relatively new situation in which music can be heard online free of charge, and copied without loss of sound quality (in digital to digital transfer conditions, at least).

Why, then, shouldn't the leftist DiY movement within punk (let us remember that not all bands which are perceived as being punk follow a DiY ethos, and that many within the punk DiY milieu are not leftists) simply abandon physical sales and switch over to digital distribution? One factor, already mentioned, is the felt-to-be-superior sound quality of vinyl. Given the rough and ready sound of much (most, I would think) DiY punk, I think another explanation is at least worth considering: having music available on vinyl is prestigious; it is a badge of significance. From what source does this significance spring? I would assert strongly, and in full mindfulness of the irony, that being able to sell even as few as 300 copies of a vinyl single today is reasonably prestigious precisely because *not just anyone can do that*.

If such is the case, perhaps DiY punk should aim to eschew the idea that a physical object – the vinyl record – evidences greater significance for the music. Doubtless there remains sufficient demand for vinyl releases from certain bands within the scene(s) at large. If Fugazi reformed tomorrow and issued a new LP, it is certain that many would want to buy it on vinyl. It is also very likely, however, that the overall sales would be a fraction of those achieved by their last album *The Argument*, issued in 2001. This change means that bands and record labels which struggle to shift 300 copies should probably not feel ashamed: selling 1000 copies today would appear to equate to selling many times that volume in earlier periods. If, for example, one compares the record sales of bands from the late 1970s or 1980s with record sales of contemporary bands filling live venues of a similar capacity, one will invariably see considerably smaller sales figures for records.

All of this raises questions around materialism, in the Marxist sense at least. Are punks guilty of commodity fetishism? I am inclined to think that such a thing is at least risked by the DiY punk movement. However, I also think there is a bit more to the story than just this. In the next section, therefore, I turn to a discussion of the materiality (or otherwise) of music in relation to an article written by Walter Benjamin in 1931.

Unpacking my Record Collection

What *is* a musical object? According to many, an MP3 is no such thing: Simon Reynolds, for example, argues that the materiality of the musical object ‘fades’ and becomes a ‘folk memory’ when MP3 is utilised to reproduce musical sound (Reynolds 2011: 125). I have critiqued Reynolds on this point at some length elsewhere (Dale 2013). For present purposes, let us just note that neither a vinyl record nor a CD nor an MP3 player, despite themselves being graspable, can make music itself into a graspable object. Musical sound, indeed, simply cannot be held in the hand: sound has no body as such.

However, music comes to being in a field of processes saturated with material relations in the Marxist sense. To that extent, it is a mistake to think of music as being immaterial. Musical agency, or ‘musicking’ as Christopher Small calls it, involves human relationships in concrete environments which can be exploitative or collaborative or both (always both, I think, but in varying proportions); music-making cannot escape material requirements such as, to use one of Small’s examples, the need for cleaners to contribute to a concert (Small 1998). In Small’s view, classical concert environments need to think about such material relations if the musical event is to lean towards collaboration and mutual endeavour rather than towards exploitation and dominion. If a ‘classical’ musicologist can show such sensitive consideration of social relations and the possibility for greater fairness in music-making contexts, one would think that the DiY punk scene would find it easy to do the same. When it comes, however, to the question of manufacturing and retailing material products for musical experience – making records, that is – I would suggest that DiY is rather lagging behind some of the critical thinking of Small in particular.

The question is, why make records in the twenty first century? If it turns out to be fairer when no such product is manufactured/retailed, and when no measurement of popularity is made, such that competition is minimised and profit is limited – if these things turned out to be benefits which arise from the abandonment of ‘the record’, should we really hesitate? I believe we should, if we are willing to consider everything that has been said so far in relation to Walter Benjamin’s 1931 essay ‘Unpacking my Library’ (Benjamin 1991: 61-69).

Benjamin argues that, for the book collector, the objects of desire do not merely ‘come alive in him’; first and foremost, ‘it is he who lives in them’ (69). For Benjamin, books matter; particularly so when the ‘intimate relationship’ of collector and object involves a certain ‘feeling of responsibility towards his [sic] property’ (ibid). This is an essentially phenomenological point: object animates subject as well as the opposite being the case. Benjamin had made a commitment to Marxism in the late 1920s and remained committed for the rest of his life. The question in his mind, within the article in question, seems to me to be just this: will I be able to hang on to my books ‘come the glorious day’?

Benjamin’s assessment of the private book collection in 1931 is that ‘time is running out’ (Benjamin 1999: 68). Can we say much the same of the record collection as a material presence in the average Western household today? Perhaps so; after Benjamin, however, maybe we should hesitate before mourning this loss: a Marxist reluctant to consider the radical transformation of material relations could hardly be worthy of the name, after all. We can perhaps say the same of a leftist, DiY-

orientated punk. Whilst capitalism remains the dominant mode, it seems likely that records will retain much of their status as privately-owned commodities which, for the fan, feel like talismans. Will such always be the case, however, and should leftist DiY punks be tacitly accepting such a situation?

Benjamin's view, clearly stated, is that 'the collector... by owning the work of art, shares in its ritual power'; conversely, 'the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner' (Benjamin 1999: 237). Perhaps, one day, the private collection will be a thing of the past and all things will be held in common. How soon, though? The historically-informed Marxist would not want to hold her breath, one imagines, since a considerable length of time has elapsed since Marx suggested that the demise of capitalism was imminent. Benjamin, meanwhile, admits that his comments on book collecting are 'a bit *ex officio*' (68). The use of Latin here is slightly oblique but I take it as a hint that, despite his firm commitment to Marxism, Benjamin suspects himself of not quite towing the official party line. With this in mind, we might also find it rather illuminating that he asserts that, 'Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter' (68). Why do the objects only 'get their due' in the private collection? Because, 'for a collector... ownership is the most intimate relationship one can have to objects' (69).

Conclusion

In order to judge whether 'anyone can do it', we need to know what 'it' is. From 1977 onwards, DiY punk tended to treat making a record as one of the most important examples of 'it' which a punk band could do. There was more to the DiY impetus than just making records, certainly: for many young people, simply grabbing some instruments and making some noise, perhaps culminating in a public performance of some kind or other, was enough to satisfy the urge to 'go and do it'. Some young bands at that time, furthermore, were already thinking critically about whether they should even be making a consumer item called a record. In a 1978 TV interview with John Peel, for example, members of the Mekons ruminate precisely on this question (Anon 1978). 'Why bother making a record at all in the first place?', asks Peel. 'It's a key part of a career', replies one Mekon. 'I think a lot of Mekons fans do want to go out and buy product', says another, visibly hesitating embarrassedly at the word 'fans' as his band mates snigger. 'Surely we're just perpetuating a lot of things that we're not necessarily in favour of by just making another product?' asks a third member of the band; 'perhaps we'd rather they spent their money buying guitars and amplifiers than buying records' responds the Mekon who had initially mentioned a 'career' as being the reason to make a record. Clearly, then, there was critical thinking about consumerism occurring in the so-called post-punk period of the late 1970s and early 1980s, as David Wilkinson has shown (2016). However, most groups quickly assumed that making records was the way to go (and the Mekons were something of a special case being, arguably, the archetypal leftist punk band of the 1970s): 'do it yourself' meant 'make a record for yourself', for many, it seems.

Times have changed, in many ways, and yet it still seems to be assumed (typically without the critical reflection which the Mekons displayed) that making records is 'a key part of a career'. Self-releasing a record, indeed, seems to be very much standardised now as a good way to get a foothold in the music industry: the title alone of *Music Marketing for the DIY Musician: Creating and Executing a Plan of Attack on a Low Budget* is indicative of the general situation (Borg 2014). DiY punk, in its leftist/idealist form, is not really supposed to be about careers, however: I would suggest that, rather, 'doing it for the hell of it' is supposed to be the DiY punk ideal. Anyone is supposed to be able to do it; leftist DiY idealists tend to claim to be all inclusive. For Alan O'Connor, 'The major challenge facing the music industry and DiY punk labels is digital downloads' (2008: 81): but is this not a bit

like the punk scene finally agreeing that 'home taping is killing music'? If the possibility of making my music available for download free-of-charge means that I can distribute some weird recordings without stumping up large sums for making a batch of 'vinyls', is that not rather good for overall inclusivity? Some will even celebrate the fact that the music industry proper is facing an 'existential challenge' (as some might put it), furthermore.

In some cases (and I worry that O'Connor might represent one but I hasten to add that I suspect that I am another), the ageing punk aficionado risks clinging to their records like a drowning man clinging to a sinking ship. Perhaps we just need to let it go. That said, the thoughts of Walter Benjamin make an interesting counterpoint to such an argument. Perhaps, actually, it is too early for us to let our punk record collections be submerged into, say, some publically-owned and publically-shared resource with no individual owner and perhaps no set of physical resources called 'records'. After all, the glorious day has certainly not yet come. In the meantime – in limbo, some will say – we perhaps have to just keep going, with an eye to the future but, at the same time, an awareness that whilst commodity fetishism prevails, we are likely to continue fetishizing the physical objects which carry music.ⁱⁱⁱ

DiY punk is not a catch all solution to capitalism and its exclusive, disempowering ways, then: DiY *does* empower many people, *is* inclusive of many people, but it doesn't change the world on its own. I have observed in recent years, in punk-orientated contexts, a certain snootiness about the 'cupcakes and knitting brigade' who often populate craft markets with handmade goods in a manner which is either stated or implied to be petit-bourgeois. There is a popular aphorism in the UK, however, that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. There is no doubt that the DiY punk movement, historically, has had petit-bourgeois tendencies: for example, making small runs of records, or, dare I say it, button badges, is actually small-scale capitalism in action, even when little or no profit is made. (A badge, after all, is actually a form of marketing, and marketing can lead to huge profits, even if it loses some money in the short term.) The question, as we move forward (we in the leftist DiY punk scene, to which this author remains committed, that is), is surely how best to be more rigorously inclusive, more effectively empowering and more determinedly anti-capitalist, if DiY punk is serious about creating a situation in which anyone can do it.

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ⁱ It's worth acknowledging that not all DiY punk, today and in the past, has a leftist or anti-capitalist orientation. Much does, however, and it is to that constituency that much of the present article speaks. At several points I clarify when I am referring only to broadly anti-capitalist punk by using the word 'leftist'.

ⁱⁱ The aesthetic which I would contend is obviously offered by *Spiral Scratch* includes: relatively 'lo-fi' (as it would later be termed) production values; straightforward recording ('first take, no dubs'); simple music (most obviously, the two-note guitar break on 'Boredom'); and so forth.

ⁱⁱⁱ Of course, record collecting is not only the preserve of the 'ageing punk aficionado': just yesterday, a colleague at my university institution remarked to me, with amazement, that his pre-teen granddaughter had abandoned her CDs for a vinyl player last Christmas. Certainly there are many individuals born after, say, 1990 who fetishize vinyl for reasons which may correlate quite strongly with the motivations of the older punk collector. There remains a question, nonetheless, as to whether what the Marxists will call a *commodity fetish* should be assumed to have revolutionary value/potential: perhaps the opposite is the case; punks should at least be willing to consider such a possibility if they are serious about maximising the radical potential of the movement(s).